

Looking for Work in an Economic Downturn

By Carrie Mayne



Finding a job is hard work. Finding a job during a recession is even tougher. It may even feel impossible to those faced with this daunting task. Companies are restructuring, downsizing, laying off or shutting down every day. Does this mean you're not going to find work? No. But it does mean you're going to have to work even harder to find a job and you may not find your ideal career-completing position at this time. Jobs are out there. No matter how weak the labor market is, people still move out of jobs for various reasons and create vacancies.

The job search advice given throughout this publication applies to any economic climate, but here are a few tidbits specific to the current economic situation that you can add to your arsenal:

- Realize that the competition for any position will be intense. With more people out of work than usual, the number of applicants for any one position will likely be quite high. For that reason, you're best off focusing your job search toward occupations for which you are currently qualified. When the labor market is tight, an employer may consider hiring someone who isn't fully qualified for a position with the idea in mind that the candidate can be trained for the skills s/he is lacking. Nowadays this will not be the case, so it's better to focus on jobs that are on par with your skill level.
- In some situations it may even be to your long-run advantage to consider accepting a position for which you are overqualified. If, for example, a company that operates in your field of interest is only filling positions that are lower than your skill level, you could look at it as an opportunity to get your foot in the door. If you're hired you will likely have many chances to impress the bosses and show your full range of talent so that when the company does open up higher-skill positions you'll have an even better chance of getting one.
- If you have enough flexibility in your personal situation, consider taking an internship, going part-time, or working freelance. Again, it's about getting your foot in the door and any of these situations will allow you to forge a relationship with an employer that could pay off in the long run.

- Think broadly about the labor market and understand how your skills may be applicable to other occupations or industries. You may be surprised to find out that with little or no training you could look for work in another occupation or industry. Often people don't realize the transferability of their skills. Widening your search scope will increase your chances of finding gainful employment. (See end of article for list of online skills analysis tools.)
- Keep abreast of information regarding the distribution of federal stimulus money. Following that trail could lead you to companies who will be hiring in order to complete government contracts.
- And last, but not least, consider going back to school. If you feel ready for a career change, or think maybe your field won't come back as strong when the economy recovers, consider starting a training or education program in a different area. Of course, you'll want to be sure to educate yourself on all the different programs out there, and be sure to choose something that fits your talents and interests and is projected to have strong growth and good wages.

Maybe this information leaves you hopeful and energized about your job search, or maybe the recession has got you so discouraged that you just can't see the light at the end of the tunnel. If the latter statement describes you best then just keep this one thing in mind: the U.S. economy has bounced back from every other downturn in history. There's nothing to say it won't be true of this one either. ☺



For more information:

- <http://online.onetcenter.org/skills/Skillsassessment>
- <http://jobs.utah.gov/jsp/wi/utalmis/reemplHome.do> Compare related occupations
- <http://jobs.utah.gov/opencms/wi/pubs/outlooks/state/index.html> Utah Job Outlook